

FOREIGN POLICY ASSOCIATION

# INFORMATION SERVICE



## *Outlying Naval Bases*

October 2, 1929

Vol. V, No. 15

25¢  
a copy

Published Fortnightly

\$5.00  
a year

EIGHTEEN EAST FORTY-FIRST STREET  
NEW YORK, N.Y.

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Published bi-weekly by the FOREIGN POLICY ASSOCIATION, Incorporated, 18 East 41st Street, New York, N. Y. JAMES G. McDONALD, *Chairman*; RAYMOND LESLIE BUELL, *Research Director*, WILLIAM T. STONE, *Washington Bureau*; ELIZABETH P. MACCALLUM, *Editor*, HELEN TERRY, *Assistant Editor*. *Research Assistants*: VERA A. MICHELES, HELEN H. MOORHEAD, ONA K. D. RINGWOOD, AGNES S. WADDELL, M. S. WERTHEIMER. ELIZABETH BATTERHAM, *Cartographer*. Subscription Rates: \$5.00 per year; to F. P. A. members \$3.00; single copies 25c.

# OUTLYING NAVAL BASES

by

WILLIAM T. STONE

*with the aid of the Research Staff of the Foreign Policy Association*

1 1 1

## INTRODUCTION

THE number and position of naval bases have played a part in all the recent international conferences dealing with the reduction or limitation of naval armaments. At the Washington Conference of 1921-1922, for example, special reference to naval bases was made in that section of the treaty which provided for maintenance of the *status quo* in a restricted area in the Pacific. Again, at the abortive Geneva Conference on naval disarmament in 1927, the question of naval bases forced itself on the attention of the negotiators. American representatives offered the relatively small number of outlying American bases as one compelling reason for their government's insistence on having certain 10,000-ton cruisers with wide cruising radius in preference to smaller cruisers with a limited cruising radius.

Following the advent to power of the British Labour party in the elections of May 30, 1929, a suggestion was made by unofficial British writers that Great Britain "neutralize" or "demilitarize" its naval bases in the Caribbean area in order to demonstrate that British naval policy is not even remotely directed against the United States.<sup>1</sup> Writing in the *Fortnightly Review*, "Augur," a well-known British publicist, suggested that the principle of perpetual peace recognized along the Canadian border of the United States might be applied to the whole Caribbean with the most far-reaching results. This writer saw in the "potentialities" of

the British possessions in the Caribbean a source of irritation to the United States, inasmuch as they might be used for bases for a possible attack on the Panama Canal. The irritation could be removed, he believed, by an offer from Great Britain to neutralize the possessions in question. "This would prove in an irresistible manner," he declared, "the resolve of the British government and the British people never to enter into a fratricidal strife with the people on the other side of the Atlantic." While this proposal was unofficial, it provoked interested comment in both England and the United States.

Another recent development relating to naval bases was recorded in the British House of Commons on July 8, 1929, when the Labour government was asked to announce its policy concerning the building of a naval base at Singapore. Around this important naval station, which is located at the tip of the Malay Peninsula, commanding the principal trade routes to the Far East and Australia, there has raged for years a bitter controversy within the British Commonwealth. A vast project for enlarging the Singapore base was being considered by the British government at the time of the Washington Conference. Work on it was begun by the Conservative government shortly afterwards; but it was suspended by the first Labour government in 1924, while it was taken up again by the Conservatives when they returned to power in 1925. Today a third reversal of policy seems imminent.

1. "Augur," "Anglo-American Relations," *Fortnightly Review*, July 1, 1929.

The present review traces briefly the relation of naval bases to naval power, and summarizes the extent and equipment of American, British and Japanese naval stations in different parts of the world. Short sections are devoted to the question of the Singapore base, and to the agreements reached at the Washington Conference.

#### STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF NAVAL BASES

The importance of outlying naval stations has been recognized ever since the Great Powers gained their first foothold in distant territories. With the growth of colonial empires and overseas possessions, and the rapid extension of economic interdependence among nations, naval bases became, in the eyes of admiralty officers the world over, an essential part of national defensive equipment.<sup>1a</sup> Thus, naval strategists hold that the chief function of naval bases today is to provide mobility for a battle fleet in any part of the world where it may be called upon to operate in time of war. The strongest battle fleet is hampered in its operations in an area far removed from its base of fuel and supplies; it may suffer severely in being employed against even a greatly inferior fleet if the latter has the advantage of near-by fuel stations, repair yards, and dry docks. The cruising radius of the largest American oil-burning battleships is limited to approximately 4,500 miles at full speed; at half speed ships of the *Wyoming* and *Oklahoma* class can steam in the neighborhood of 10,000 miles without refueling. The cruising radius of smaller auxiliaries, with a lower fuel capacity, is further limited. Submarines of the American "S" class have

a cruising radius of from 5,000 to 8,000 miles, depending on their speed. Accordingly, an American fleet operating in the Far East, where bases are few and fuel is limited, would be unequal to a Japanese fleet, inferior in numbers but operating in its home waters within easy reach of dockyards and fuel supplies. A Japanese fleet which attempted to operate anywhere between Hawaii and the Pacific coast of the United States, on the other hand, would be completely at the mercy of an American fleet backed by the docks and yards of the United States.

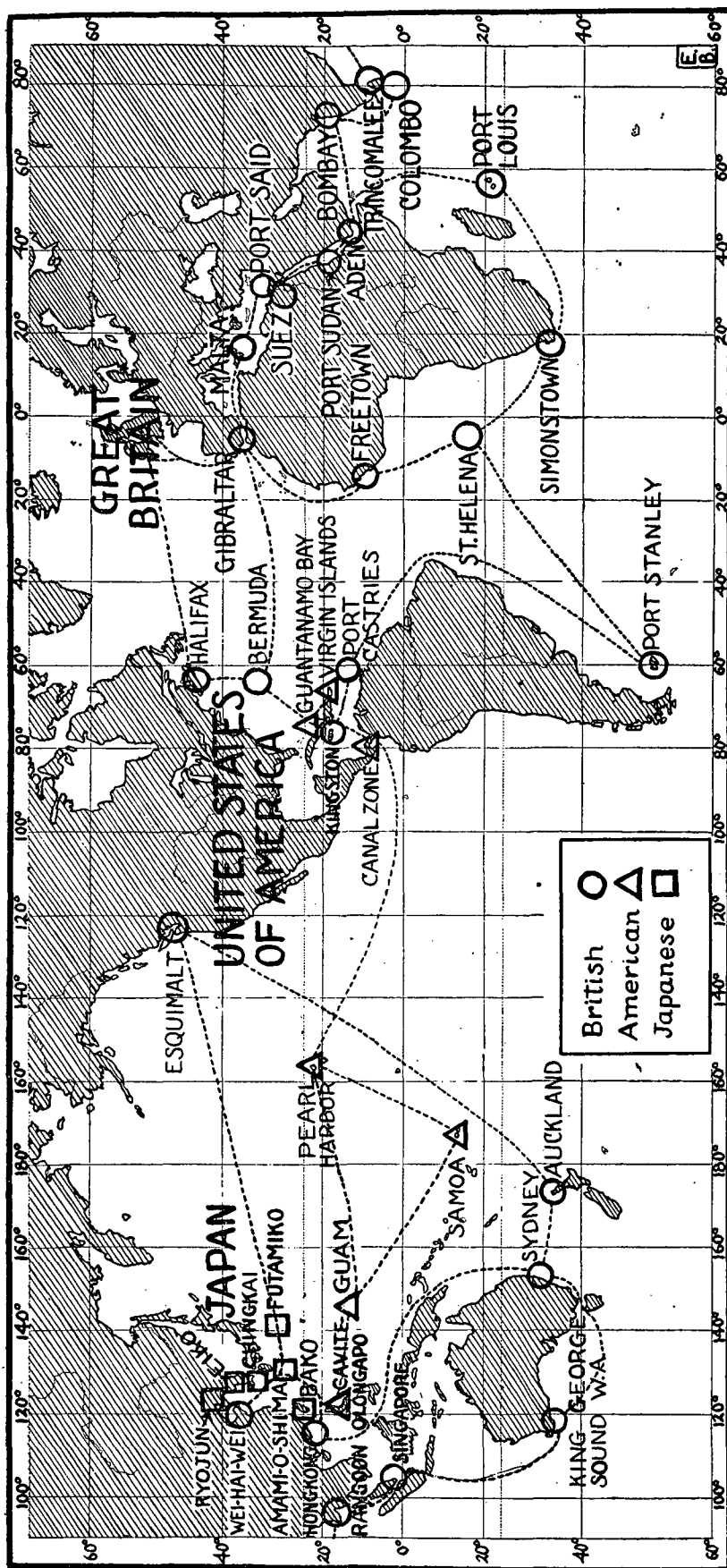
Modern naval bases are designed essentially to provide increased mobility for the fleets. Adequate fuel supply is an essential in all important naval bases. Practically all of the larger ships of the great naval powers are now oil-burning. The large bases are equipped with repair yards and supplies of all kinds. They maintain a force of engineers, draftsmen, mechanics, boiler fitters, and workmen able to perform every type of repair work. They are equipped also with dry docks capable of receiving the largest class of ships for overhauling and scraping. With the "bulging" or "blistering" of the large battleships to protect them from submarines or torpedo attack, the under-water size of capital ships has been greatly increased so that the older dry docks are no longer able to accommodate them. In a few of the largest naval bases new dry docks are being constructed to accommodate these large vessels. In addition, according to the view of the naval strategists, the more important bases should be defended by land armaments and military detachments.

#### THE WASHINGTON NAVAL CONFERENCE

At the Washington Conference the issue of naval bases in the Pacific was introduced by the Japanese delegation and resulted in prolonged discussion before the agreement to preserve the *status quo* was finally reached. The sweeping proposals made by Secretary Hughes on the opening day of the conference (November 12, 1921) called not only for the suspension of all capital ship

construction, but also for the scrapping of all battleships then being built by the United States, Great Britain and Japan. Japan, while agreeing in principle to drastic reductions in its building program, raised strongest objections at the outset to the proposed 5 to 3 ratio, demanding as a minimum 70 per cent (instead of 60 per cent) of the tonnage allotted to Great Britain and the United States. The Japanese delegation at first argued that the requirements of "na-

1a. Some writers attribute the German naval failure during the World War to Germany's lack of naval bases. "Les Bases Navales," Part II, *Le Temps*, September 8, 1929.



## NAVAL BASES OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE, THE UNITED STATES AND JAPAN

(d, defended; dr, naval dry dock; f, naval fuel oil)

### AMERICAN

Canal Zone, d, f.  
Cavite-Olongapo, d, dr, f.  
Guam, d, f.  
Guantanamo Bay, f.  
Pearl Harbor, d, dr, f.  
Samoa  
Virgin Islands

### BRITISH

Aden, f.  
Auckland, d, dr, f.  
Bermuda, d, dr, f.  
Bombay, d, dr.  
Colombo, d, f.  
Esquimalt, d, dr.  
Freetown, d, f.  
Gibraltar, d, dr, f.  
Halifax, d.

### JAPANESE

Amami-O-Shima, d.  
Bako, d, dr, f.  
Chinghai, d, dr, f.  
Eiko  
Futami Ko, d.  
Ryojun, d.

Hongkong, d, dr, f.  
King George Sound W. A.  
Kingston, d, f.  
Malta, d, dr, f.  
Port Castries  
Port Louis, d.  
Port Said, f.  
Port Stanley, f.

Port Sudan, f.  
Rangoon, f.  
St. Helena  
Simonstown, d, dr, f.  
Singapore, d, f.  
Suez, f.  
Sydney, d, dr, f.  
Trincomalee, f.  
Wei-hai-wei



tional security" of Japan demanded the higher ratio, and when this thesis was rejected, challenged the accuracy of the American figures. A factor in Japan's opposition to the 5 to 3 ratio was the hostile attitude of the Japanese press and public opinion at home, which severely criticized the ratio suggested by the United States.

#### RIVALRY IN PACIFIC RENOUNCED

In the end Japan accepted the 5 to 3 ratio, but not before it had secured two important concessions from Great Britain and the United States. The first concession was the retention of the post-Jutland battleship, *Mutsu*, whose abandonment the United States and Great Britain had originally expected. The second concession was the agreement to maintain the *status quo* in regard to naval bases in the Pacific. Japan argued that naval bases were as important as ships in evaluating naval power, and maintained that if the interests of peace demanded a drastic reduction in ship tonnage, it followed logically that naval bases should also be restricted. The Japanese delegation proposed, therefore, that the *status quo* be maintained in regard to fortifications and naval bases in the Pacific.

At that time the United States had no strong naval bases in the Pacific, but the fact that the Philippines, the Hawaiian Islands, Guam, Tutuila and the Aleutian Islands in American possession were capable of becoming strong naval bases and fueling stations, made them, in the eyes of Japan, a potential threat. With well-fortified bases at these strategic points in the Pacific, the United States would be able to operate the stronger American navy with great effectiveness in any possible war with Japan. The Japanese knew that at the moment the United States had no adequate facilities in Guam and in the Philippines, and that consequently an attack by the American fleet was not an imminent danger. But they also knew that proposals for the strengthening and fortification of American bases at Guam and Manila had already been made to Congress.

In his annual report for 1920, the Secretary of the Navy of the United States wrote that "the project for the development of

Guam as a naval base in accordance with the announced policy of the Navy Department is progressing."<sup>2</sup> In the same year two 55,000-barrel tanks for storing fuel oil were sent out to the naval station at Cavite in the Philippine Islands.<sup>3</sup> New equipment was being installed at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, and work had been begun to make this station the strongest American outlying base.

The Japanese demand placed the American delegates in a difficult position. It confronted them with the necessity of asking their government to curtail its naval program in the Pacific; if they did not do so, the success of the whole disarmament plan was put in jeopardy. Admiral Baron Kato, the principal Japanese delegate, stated quite frankly that if the Pacific fleet bases were to be excluded from the agreement, his government would be unable to accept the proposed reduction of its naval forces.

Secretary Hughes chose the first alternative. A tentative agreement was reached on December 15, 1921, when it was announced that the *status quo* would be maintained "with respect to fortifications and naval bases in the Pacific regions," but this restriction was not to apply to the Hawaiian Islands, Australia, the islands composing Japan proper, and to the coasts of the United States and Canada. When it came to drafting the precise terms of this agreement, however, serious difficulty arose. The term "Pacific regions" was objected to by Great Britain on the ground that it was too vague. As an alternative the British delegation proposed that the area in which the *status quo* was to be maintained be defined by a parallelogram, bounded by the Equator on the south, the 30th degree of north latitude on the north, the 110th degree of east longitude on the west, and the 180th degree of longitude on the east. This proposal excluded all of the British islands south of the Equator, as well as Singapore, but included the Bonin Islands belonging to Japan. (The position of the Bonin Islands is indicated on the map by the name Futami Ko.) The Japanese delegation refused to accept this proposal on the ground that the Bonin Islands formed a part of the Japanese mainland. Although the Japanese govern-

2. U. S. A., *Report of the Secretary of the Navy, 1920*, p. 13.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 702.

ment apparently had no intention of enlarging its defenses there, it resented the suggestion that outside powers should attempt to define the extent of Japan proper.

The United States, on the other hand, objected to the Japanese contention for the reason that the Bonin Islands—which are more than 500 miles from Tokio—would, if fortified, be in a position to dominate Guam, while cutting the communications of the United States with the Philippines. Press dispatches at the time reported that just before the Washington Conference met, fortifications had been hurriedly completed on the Bonin Islands.<sup>4</sup>

#### STATUS QUO AGREEMENT

The British parallelogram was finally abandoned, and another agreement was incorporated in Article XIX of the Washington Naval Treaty. The United States undertook to maintain the *status quo* in possessions which it then held or might in the future acquire in the Pacific, except those adjacent to the coast of the United States, Alaska, the Panama Canal Zone, and Hawaii. The Aleutian Islands were not included among the excepted areas. The British Empire agreed to maintain the *status quo* at Hongkong and the other insular possessions which it held or might acquire in the Pacific east of the 110th degree of east longitude, except those adjacent to the coast of Canada, New Zealand, and Australia and its territories. As Singapore is west of the 110th degree of east longitude, it was automatically excluded from the limitations of the agreement. Finally, Japan agreed to maintain the *status quo* in the Bonin Islands, the Kurile Islands, the Loochoo Islands, Amami-Oshima, Formosa and the Pescadores, as well as any other insular possessions it might acquire in the Pacific in the future. The concluding paragraph of Article XIX of the treaty is as follows:

“The maintenance of the *status quo* under the foregoing provisions implies that no new fortifications or naval bases shall be established in the territories and possessions specified; that no measures shall be taken to increase the existing naval facilities for the repair and maintenance

of naval forces, and that no increase shall be made in the coast defenses of the territories and possessions above specified. This restriction, however, does not preclude such repair and replacement of worn-out weapons and equipment as is customary in naval and military establishments in time of peace.”

#### EFFECT OF ARTICLE XIX

The effect of this agreement was to bring an end to impending naval competition in the Pacific. The United States renounced its right to build up the defenses of the Philippines for the duration of the treaty, and in effect relinquished the possibility of operating a large fleet in Far Eastern waters. The two bases at that time in commission in the Philippines—Cavite and Olongapo—were not equipped to serve as a fleet base. They possessed but one floating dry dock, the *Dewey*, which had a limited capacity and could not handle battleships. Repair facilities were limited to smaller ships. Guam and Samoa were strategically important, but were not equipped as bases. The latter was little more than an anchorage.

Japan's six naval stations were all in close proximity to Japanese waters, and were of no possible value for offensive purposes. In time of war, however, they would be of the greatest importance for defense. Of the six bases, that at Bako, in Formosa, was the only one which had any facilities for handling ships. This station was equipped with a naval dry dock, repair yards and a fueling depot. The Bonin Islands (the Futami Ko base) had strategic value but had not been equipped with oil or docks. Fuel oil was available at Ching kai and Ryojun, while Eiko, in Korea, and Amami-Oshima were little more than anchorages. By agreeing not to acquire new bases in the Pacific, Japan practically limited the usefulness of her fleet to home waters, and in effect announced that the Japanese navy would be used only within the Asiatic area. The Philippines, however, still remain within the scope of Japanese naval activity. But it is questionable, according to naval experts, whether the existence of even the largest fortified bases in the Philippines would protect the islands from attack, as Japanese ships would always be within easy distance of their home yards.

4. *Japan Weekly Chronicle*, December 29, 1921.

Great Britain's sacrifices in the Pacific were less important. Within the area defined by the treaty it had only two stations, Hongkong and Wei-hai wei.<sup>5</sup> The latter is an anchorage without other facilities, while the Hongkong base could hardly be defended

in time of war. It is a fuel station and is equipped with a dry dock. The Australian and New Zealand bases are excluded from the agreement and Singapore lies just beyond the limits of the Washington Treaty area.

### BRITISH NAVAL POLICY

British naval policy underwent many changes after the World War. One of the features of this change was the increased emphasis on the value of outlying bases, particularly those which guard the trade route to the Far East. In the years just before the World War the North Sea Division was the strongest unit of the Grand Fleet. With the elimination of Germany as a great naval power, however, the need for concentrating a powerful fleet in the North Sea passed, and on April 7, 1919 the Grand Fleet was officially abolished.

British naval strategy was now directed chiefly toward insuring the safety of the trade routes rather than toward the attainment of local supremacy in any quarter of the globe. The extent of these trade routes is described by one British writer as follows:<sup>6</sup>

"Each week about six million tons of food and twenty million tons of raw material are brought into the United Kingdom to maintain this gigantic volume of trade. Fourteen hundred British merchant vessels of 3,000 tons and over are every day at sea while at the same time fourteen hundred other British ships are loading or discharging in ports over the world. The sea lanes regularly traversed by British shipping have a total length of 80,000 miles. Of the four main arteries along which this gigantic flow of traffic proceeds, the eastern one is by far the most difficult to defend. It leads through the Mediterranean and the Suez Canal, into the Indian Ocean, where the volume of shipping divides—one stream going to the China Sea and the other to Australia and New Zealand."

### DEFENSE OF BRITISH TRADE ROUTES

The defense of the trade route to the Far East has become, therefore, one of the prime

objectives of British naval policy and along this route more than half of the twenty-six British bases and naval stations are situated. As far as the Suez Canal the route is well controlled by Gibraltar and Malta.

While the natural defenses of Gibraltar are no longer impregnable, as they were in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the fortress still holds a commanding position at the gateway to the Mediterranean. The naval base has been thoroughly modernized and is furnished with fuel oil, naval and commercial dry docks and full repair equipment. A British garrison of 2,600 troops is stationed regularly at the fortress.<sup>7</sup> A staff of 108 officers, engineers, draftsmen and clerical assistants were on the payroll in 1929.<sup>8</sup>

Malta, the headquarters of the Mediterranean Fleet, is the largest and most completely equipped British naval base. It has large dry docks for handling battleships, complete repair facilities, and large stores of fuel oil. It is strongly defended, and manned by approximately 4,850 British regulars. The technical staff consists of 290 officers and engineers.

Beyond Malta the main trade route to Australia, New Zealand and the Far East is less adequately protected, despite the fact that there are nine naval stations at regular intervals along the way. These include Suez and Port Said, where fuel oil is available; Port Sudan and Aden, which are unprotected oil depots without other facilities; Bombay and Rangoon in India; Trincomalee and Colombo in Ceylon; and Singapore at the tip of the Malay Peninsula. With the exception of Bombay and Singapore, none of these stations have dry docks or facilities for repair of naval vessels.

Beyond Singapore there are the Dominion bases at Auckland, New Zealand and

5. Great Britain holds Wei-hai-wei under lease from the Chinese government. At the Washington Conference it was declared that Great Britain was willing to have Chinese sovereignty restored in Wei-hai-wei subject to the condition that it might still be used as a sanatorium or summer resort for ships of war from the tropics or the southern sections of the China station. (Cf. *Minutes of Washington Conference on the Limitation of Armament*, p. 227, 1908.) Negotiations for the surrender of the Wei-hai-wei lease have taken place from time to time, but without result. (Cf. *New York Times*, September 15, 1929.)

6. H. C. Bywater, *Navies and Nations*, p. 86.

7. Great Britain, *Army Estimates*, 1929, Cmd. 54, p. 294.

8. Great Britain, *Navy Estimates*, 1929, Cmd. 62, p. 436.



Sydney, Australia. Both of these are equipped with naval dry docks and are defended stations. King George Sound in Western Australia and Wei-hai-wei on the Yellow Sea in northern China are anchorages without fuel oil or other naval facilities. Hongkong cannot be developed as a naval base under the Washington Treaty.

#### THE SINGAPORE PROJECT

The controversy which has raged about the development of a great naval base at Singapore arises in large part from the strategic position occupied by this base on the Far East route. The Japanese delegation raised the question of the status of Singapore at the Washington Conference. The establishment of a large base at this place had been mentioned publicly for the first time in 1921, just prior to the conference, but work was not actually begun for another two years. In March 1923, the First Lord of the Admiralty said:

"We are beginning . . . [the creation] at Singapore of a naval base capable of dealing with the requirements of a fleet of modern capital ships. . . . At present, there is no dock in British territory in the Far East capable of taking a capital ship. The ultimate development . . . will cost some £11,000,000, but this will be spread over a long period of years."<sup>9</sup>

Two explanations for the project were made: first, the necessity for protecting the trade route; and second, the defense requirements of Australia and New Zealand. During the early part of 1919, Admiral Jellicoe had been sent to the Dominions to consider the whole problem of Imperial defense, and he had reported that the safety of Australia, New Zealand and India depended on strong bases at Singapore and Colombo which could be used as the headquarters of a strong Pacific Fleet. Although his recommendations were never carried out, Admiral Jellicoe's plan provided for the participation of the Dominions, including Canada, in the expense of maintaining the fleet.

When the Singapore project was launched in Parliament in 1923, it met with determined opposition from the Liberal and Labour parties, both of which joined in con-

demning the scheme on the ground that it constituted a threat to Japan. The Japanese, not only at the Washington Conference but subsequently when work on the project actually began, gave substance to the protests of the opposition in Great Britain. As Japan is the only naval power in the western Pacific, its government assumed that the Singapore base had a direct relation to the Japanese fleet. They felt that the project indicated that Japan was now regarded as a possible enemy by Great Britain. Important Japanese newspapers opposed the scheme from the beginning. An editorial in the journal *Hochi* in February 1924 stated that the Singapore scheme could only be interpreted by the Japanese as an open challenge, and made an appeal for its abandonment in the name of world peace. While the enlargement of Singapore was not prohibited by the Washington Naval Treaty, the *Jiji* wrote: "There is no denying the fact that the plan runs counter to the spirit of the Washington Conference, nor is there any doubt that it presupposes Japan as a potential enemy, a fact which is certainly disturbing to Anglo-Japanese friendship."<sup>10</sup>

In London the Conservative government denied a violation of the spirit of the Washington Treaty and repudiated the statement that development of Singapore indicated the slightest distrust of Japan. Conservative spokesmen pointed out that Singapore was almost 3,000 miles from Japan, and could hardly be used as a base for offensive operations against that country.

The original plans for enlarging Singapore have been altered several times. At the outset it was assumed that nothing more was contemplated than the extension of the naval works which had existed at Keppel Harbor since 1882. The commercial dry dock at Keppel Harbor was large enough to accommodate any cruiser and "unbulged" battleship in the British navy. The old base was well equipped as a fuel and supply station. With enlargement of the dry dock or construction of a new dock, in the opinion of some British naval experts, it would have sufficed for the needs of a battle squadron.

When the project was communicated to

9. Great Britain, House of Commons, *Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. 161, col. 1093.

10. Quoted in Bywater, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

Parliament, however, that body forecast an expenditure of £10,500,000 (approximately \$51,000,000). Of this amount £5,100,000 was for new wharves, basins, railways, roads and a berth for a floating dock. A graving dock was to cost £1,000,000. Offices, dwellings, and other buildings would cost £420,000; contingencies, £1,200,000; and machinery £1,200,000. A floating dry dock, acquired from Germany, was to have been sent out to Singapore, but this was later found unsuitable, and an additional £1,000,000 was set aside for construction of a new floating dock. Instead of building the base at Keppel Harbor, another site was chosen on the Straits separating the island from the peninsula of Johore.

Opposition to the Singapore scheme came from two sources; both the Liberal and Labour parties attacked the plan because of its effect on general international relations, and particularly on relations with Japan. It was contended that the naval situation in the Pacific had undergone a complete change since 1921, when Japan was building a large fleet avowedly to maintain the balance of power against the United States. Since the Washington Conference the American and Japanese battle fleets had been reduced to eighteen and ten ships respectively, the insular bases they were preparing in the western Pacific were not proceeded with, and the danger of war had receded into the background. The necessity, therefore, of maintaining a great British battle fleet in the Pacific had passed, and with it the need of an elaborate base at Singapore or anywhere else within the Pacific zone.

Furthermore, naval experts and a minority group of naval officers attacked the plan on strategic grounds, maintaining that the base could not be defended against enemy attack, so that in time of war it would become a liability rather than an asset. The plans for the base did not include defenses, and without defenses, according to this view, the base would be useless.<sup>11</sup>

When the British Labour party came into power in 1924, one of its first acts was to suspend the work at Singapore. On March 18, 1924, the Parliamentary Secretary for the Admiralty stated that after full consideration of all the relevant facts and consul-

tation with the Dominions overseas, the government had decided not to proceed further with the Singapore scheme.<sup>12</sup>

In explanation of this action, Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, the Prime Minister, stated that the Labour government was not abandoning the Singapore base because the scheme was contrary to the Washington Naval Treaty; on the contrary that agreement clearly excluded Singapore from the *status quo* agreement in the Pacific. Rather the base was being abandoned because its completion was incompatible with the foreign policy of the Labour government. He stated that the government had consulted the Dominions, requesting their opinion on the action contemplated. Canada and the Irish Free State had replied that they wished to refrain from giving any advice on the question. Australia, New Zealand, and Newfoundland had replied that they wished the Singapore project to be completed, New Zealand particularly attaching great importance to the development of the base on the grounds of naval strategy. All of the Dominions, however, expressed sympathy with the general foreign policy of the Labour government in the interests of which Prime Minister MacDonald wished to drop the work at Singapore. This policy looked toward disarmament, arbitration and conciliation through the League of Nations and the furtherance of peace in every possible way; it could hardly be pursued hand in hand with the development of a large base at Singapore.<sup>13</sup>

The Labour government was supported by the Liberal party in the vote on Singapore, and work on the base was abandoned.

When the Conservative party returned to power, it raised the question of Singapore again, and succeeded in carrying appropriations in the naval estimates for renewing work where it had been left off. At the present time work on the large graving dock is proceeding rapidly, and a new floating dry dock is being built. In the debates on the naval estimates for 1927 the Labour opposition severely criticized the scrapping of the dock acquired from Germany and its replacement, at a large extra expense, by the new dock.<sup>14</sup>

12. Great Britain, *Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. 171, No. 35, p. 287.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 315-326.

14. *Ibid.*, Vol. 193, No. 35, p. 948.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 89.

By March 31, 1929, approximately £1,650,000 had been expended on the Singapore base. The appropriation for 1929 was £602,000 and the amount yet to be expended by Great Britain before the work is completed is estimated at approximately £5,700,000.<sup>15</sup> This does not include the contributions received from or promised by the Federated Malay States and the Dominions.

Since the present Labour government is still opposed to the Singapore project and since it still enjoys Liberal support in this policy, it will in all probability suspend work on the base during the coming session of Parliament.

Although Australia and New Zealand have urged the development of Singapore, neither Dominion contributes a proportionate share to naval defense.<sup>15a</sup> The fact that Australia began to dismantle its navy at the very moment when Great Britain was preparing to create the new base at Singapore aroused comment in both countries. During the World War the Australian navy had attained formidable dimensions, as a result largely of aid from the British government. The fleet consisted of thirty-three units, including one battle cruiser and five light cruisers, eleven destroyers and six submarines. In 1922, however, the Australian government, for financial reasons, was forced to place twenty ships out of commission. Later it began to build up the fleet again. Since 1924 Australia has ordered two cruisers and two control submarines from Great Britain and has authorized the establishment of a fueling base at Port Darwin and seaplane bases at Sydney and other ports. The naval station at Sydney is equipped with a dry dock and repair facilities. New Zealand also

has a station equipped with docks and ample fuel supply at Auckland. But New Zealand's share in the naval defense of the British Empire is limited to the maintenance of two British cruisers, together with a depot ship at Auckland and two sloops. This fleet constitutes the New Zealand division under the command of a Commodore.

Canada maintains virtually no navy, and since 1922 has kept in commission only two destroyers, four armed trawlers, and a motor launch. The staff of the naval dockyards at Halifax and Esquimalt have been reduced and no definite naval policy has been adopted. A report by Lord Jellicoe on Canadian naval requirements was presented to the House of Commons at Ottawa on March 10, 1920; this was followed two days later by the announcement that the Minister of Marine had ordered the demobilization of the Canadian naval forces with the exception of 500 men belonging to the Naval College.

At the Imperial Conference of 1921, when the whole question of naval defense was discussed, the following resolution was adopted:

"While recognizing the necessity of cooperation among the various portions of the Empire to provide such naval defense as may prove to be essential for security, and while holding that equality with the naval strength of any other Power is minimum standard for that purpose, the Conference is of opinion that the method and expense of such cooperation are matters for the final determination of the several Parliaments concerned, and that any recommendations should be deferred until after the Conference on Disarmament."<sup>16</sup>

No more definite policy has been agreed upon since 1921.

## OUTLYING NAVAL BASES OF THE UNITED STATES

American naval strategy is concerned with four principal problems: protection of the Atlantic and Pacific coast line and coastwise shipping; defense of the Panama Canal; defense of American commerce and overseas shipping; protection of the Philippines and insular possessions. Following the Washington Conference, the task of develop-

ing a definite naval policy was assigned to the General Board of the Navy. A number of principles were laid down, among them one applying to naval bases which was as follows:

"To have always in mind that a system of outlying naval and commercial bases suitably distributed, developed and defended is one of the most important elements of national strength."<sup>17</sup>

15. Great Britain, *Navy Estimates*, 1929, Cmd. 62, p. 217.  
15a. In 1928 the collective payments of the four principal Dominions was approximately £4,000,000, while Great Britain's appropriation was £57,300,000. *Navy Estimates*, 1928, Cmd. 62, p. 7.

16. Conference of Prime Ministers and Representatives of the United Kingdom, the Dominions, and India, June, July and August, 1921, *Summary of the Transactions*, p. 12.

17. U. S. A., *Report of the Secretary of the Navy*, 1922, p. 3.

In accordance with this principle the United States has done two things. It has carried out repairs on bases in the Pacific affected by the Washington Treaty and developed those of its bases not affected by the Washington Treaty—viz., Pearl Harbor (Hawaii), the Panama Canal Zone, Guantanamo (Cuba), and the Virgin Islands in the West Indies.

The extent to which Article XIX of the Washington Naval Treaty precludes installation of new equipment and defense works in Pacific bases covered by the agreement is not entirely clear. The final clause of Article XIX states that "This restriction [on fortifications, etc.] does not preclude such repair and replacement of worn-out weapons and equipment as is customary in naval and military establishments in time of peace." It is argued that this proviso permits replacement of obsolete batteries by new and superior weapons, and old dry docks by larger and more modern equipment.<sup>18</sup>

The United States has carried out minor repairs at its Philippine station at Cavite. In 1922 the naval base at Olongapo, the Philippines, was virtually closed and all equipment, with the exception of the floating dry dock, transferred to Cavite.<sup>19</sup> Reconstruction of the marine railways at Cavite was completed in 1927 and 1928,<sup>20</sup> and drydock repairs were undertaken. Dredging and minor repairs have also been kept up in the other stations covered by the Washington Treaty, but the larger projects tentatively considered in 1920 (see p. 262) have been abandoned.

The most extensive work of all has been done at Pearl Harbor. This base is too far from the Philippines to be of very great value in case the entire fleet were operating in the Far East, but it is regarded as a highly important outpost for defensive purposes. Development of the base has been progressing steadily since 1920. At the present time it has a large naval dry dock and repair shops, a naval air station at Ford Island, two thousand feet of reinforced concrete wharfage, a large oil depot, a radio station, an ammunition depot and a sub-

marine base.<sup>21</sup> A marine reservation is maintained near the base. Extensive fortifications and defenses are maintained by the War Department. Battleships of the *Maryland* and *Lexington* class can be docked at Pearl Harbor and repaired by the naval station force.

Since the opening of the Panama Canal to traffic the American Battle Fleet has been stationed on the Pacific Coast in time of peace. The Scouting Fleet has been stationed on the east coast. The Asiatic Fleet, consisting of an old armored cruiser, a destroyer squadron, six submarines and an airplane squadron and its tender, normally operates in Philippine waters during the winter and in northern China waters during the summer. Chefoo, about 50 miles west of Wei-hai-wei, is used as a summer base.<sup>22</sup>

#### DEFENSE OF THE PANAMA CANAL

United States naval policy in the Caribbean is concerned primarily with protection of the Panama Canal. Although the bases at Guantanamo in Cuba and St. Thomas in the Virgin Islands have not been fully developed, they are strategically situated across the Atlantic approaches to the canal, and are potentially valuable.

Guantanamo was leased from Cuba under the terms of two agreements signed by President Roosevelt and President Palma of Cuba in 1903.<sup>23</sup> These agreements, which were not submitted to the Senate for ratification, provided for the lease of an area of land and water at Guantanamo and at Bahia Honda for an annual rental of \$2,000. This grant gave the United States the right to develop the harbors and adjacent land for use as coaling and naval stations. The United States recognized "the continuance of the ultimate sovereignty of the Republic of Cuba over the areas," whereas Cuba agreed that during the period of occupation the United States should "exercise complete jurisdiction and control," including the right of eminent domain.

It has been argued that the leasing of this naval station to the United States would

18. Bywater, *op. cit.*, p. 128.

19. U. S. A., *Report of the Secretary of the Navy*, 1922, p. 24.

20. *Ibid.*, 1928, p. 152.

21. *Ibid.*, 1920, p. 702; 1922, p. 82, 84; 1923, p. 36; 1928, p. 310.

22. U. S. A., *Information concerning the United States Navy and other Navies*, p. 4, 132.

23. W. M. Malloy, *Treaties of the United States*, Vol. II, p. 358.



have the effect of bringing Cuba automatically into any war in which the United States might be engaged. When Cuba entered the World War, President Menocal stated in his message to the Cuban Congress (April 6, 1917) that among the reasons which prevented Cuba from remaining neutral were the moral and legal obligations which bound the country to the United States.

An effort to secure additional land for the Guantanamo naval station was begun in 1910, when an offer to surrender the Bahia Honda lease, which had not been developed, and to increase the annual rental to \$5,000 was accepted by the Cuban government. This agreement, dated December 27, 1911, was never ratified, however, and did not come into effect. Opposition was raised in the Cuban Senate to alienation of additional territory at Guantanamo.

The base here is equipped with fuel depots, modern docks and wharfs and has facilities for minor repairs. A marine barracks is located at the station. It is not defended, however, and has no dry dock.

The possibility of developing St. Thomas as a naval station was the important consideration in the purchase of the Virgin Islands from Denmark in 1916. The islands were ceded to the United States in return for \$25,000,000. The harbor at St. Thomas is one of the finest in the West Indies, and the naval station has now been equipped with fuel storage tanks and facilities for handling small ship repairs. A marine corps detachment is stationed permanently at St. Thomas, and the commandant of the naval station is in charge of all naval activities in the Porto Rico-Virgin Islands area.<sup>24</sup>

At the Panama Canal itself the United States has spent \$113,127,000 on fortifica-

tions and national defense.<sup>25</sup> The Canal Zone constitutes the Fifteenth Naval District, with headquarters at Balboa. A naval air station, submarine base, torpedo depot and marine barracks are located at Coco Solo. The largest battleships can pass through the canal and dock at either entrance. The naval base is well equipped with fuel oil and coal.

Much of the diplomacy of the United States in regard to the Caribbean area has been dominated by strategic considerations —by a desire to obtain naval bases for the American navy in this area and by a desire to keep other powers from establishing a position here that would threaten the Panama Canal. Thus for a number of years certain American statesmen and naval officers wished either to annex or to lease Samana Bay in Santo Domingo; they likewise had an eye to acquiring the Mole St. Nicholas, Haiti.<sup>26</sup> Although the United States later abandoned the effort to obtain these bases in Santo Domingo and Haiti, it did obtain, by the Bryan-Chamorro treaty of 1914, the right to establish such bases on Nicaraguan territory. The Nicaraguan government leased the Great Corn Island and the Little Corn Island to the United States for 99 years, and also, for the same period, granted the right to the United States "to establish, operate and maintain a naval base at such place on the territory of Nicaragua bordering upon the Gulf of Fonseca as the Government of the United States may select." The United States was given the option of renewing these leases for a further term of 99 years. Costa Rica and Salvador protested against the Bryan-Chamorro treaty,<sup>27</sup> and the United States has not apparently taken any steps to construct the naval bases it authorized.

### BRITISH NAVAL BASES IN THE CARIBBEAN

Judged by the standards of Gibraltar, Malta and Singapore, Great Britain has no modern naval bases in the West Indies. Bermuda, some 700 miles from New York, assumed importance as a naval station in 1869 when a large floating dry dock was

towed across the Atlantic and placed in position at St. George. The present dry dock is equipped to handle small cruisers, but is unable to accommodate any of the larger ships.

25. Governor of the Panama Canal, *Annual Report*, 1928, p. 96.

26. Sumner Welles, *Naboth's Vineyard*, Chapter V. J. N. Leger, *Haiti, Son Histoire et ses Détracteurs*, p. 244.

27. "The United States and the Nicaragua Canal," F. P. A. *Information Service*, Vol. IV, No. 6, p. 118.

24. U. S. A., *Information concerning the United States Navy and other Navies*, p. 130.



The naval establishment was considerably reduced after the Spanish-American War and today the technical and engineering staff consists of 63 officers, engineers and draftsmen. The original coaling station has been replaced by tanks for storing fuel and the island is at present the headquarters of the Eighth Cruiser Squadron, composed of five small 6-inch-gun cruisers and two sloops. The cruisers are the *Dispatch*, *Cape Town*, *Caradoc*, *Colombo*, and *Durban*, of between 4,000 and 4,800 tons displacement. The harbor at Hamilton affords a safe anchorage for smaller vessels, but is too shallow for the larger battleships of deep draft.

The fortifications of Bermuda are limited to two old forts which could be annihilated by the heavy guns of first-line battleships. While a battalion of the regular army is stationed on the island, it numbers less than 400 officers and men. The local forces consist only of a voluntary rifle corps, a small cadet corps and a militia corps established on the basis of voluntary enlistment and numbering something over 100 men.

The island of Jamaica, commanding the approach to the Panama Canal, is of greater strategic importance, but its defenses are not much more effective than Bermuda and its facilities and equipment are less adequate. The harbor at Kingston admits the larger merchant vessels, and the naval station is equipped with a fueling base for warships. But the base is without a dry dock of any kind, and cannot be used for extensive overhauling and repair of even the smaller cruisers. While listed as a "defended" station, the fortifications at Kingston consist of one heavy battery, manned by a battalion of some 700 officers and men of the regular British army. As in Bermuda, the island maintains a local militia for home defense and also a police constabulary. Under the militia law every male inhabitant between the ages of 18 and 40, with certain exceptions, is liable for service on the island in time of emergency.

Port Castries, the third of the Caribbean bases, is an anchorage without fueling station or dry dock. Situated on St. Lucia, one of the small Windward Islands, it has no defenses of any kind and no regular army post.

British possessions in the other Windward and Leeward Islands, in Barbados, Trinidad and the Bahamas have no stations and no regular army troops. With the exceptions of Bermuda and Jamaica, they are all without fortifications and maintain only small companies of volunteer militia for home defense. British Honduras, facing the Caribbean on the Central American coast, and British Guiana to the south, are likewise without regular army posts.

#### THE WEST INDIES AND A NEUTRALIZED CANAL

There is little evidence to show that the United States regards these British naval stations as a potential threat to the Panama Canal. It is pointed out that both Bermuda and Jamaica are close to the Atlantic coast of the United States, and that they could be reached and captured by an American fleet in time of war before any British fleet could cross the Atlantic. The fortifications are not adequate to repel attack and could not be strengthened without due warning to the United States. In recent years there has been no attempt on the part of Great Britain to develop either station.

The only suggestion that the United States views the British possessions in the West Indies with concern is found in a resolution introduced by Senator Reed of Missouri in 1923, requesting the President to ascertain whether the British government would be willing to discuss the ceding of its possessions in the West Indies to the United States.<sup>28</sup> This resolution was referred to committee without debate, and was not reported favorably. A similar resolution introduced by Senator Reed made the same request with regard to French possessions in the West Indies, but was never discussed.

Moreover, the possibility of a British attack on the Panama Canal has already been guarded against. It is pointed out by a British writer<sup>29</sup> that Great Britain is pledged to observe the neutrality of the Panama Canal under the Hay-Pauncefote treaty of November 18, 1901, which provides in Article III that "the canal shall never be blockaded, nor shall any right of war be

28. Senate Resolution 25, 67th Congress, 1st Session.

29. "The Caribbean," *Fortnightly Review*, August 1, 1929.

exercised nor any act of hostility be committed within it."<sup>30</sup> As the basis for neutralization of the canal definite rules are incorporated in the treaty substantially the same as those embodied in the Convention of Constantinople for the free navigation of the Suez Canal. The canal is to be free and open to the vessels of commerce and of war of all nations observing these rules, on terms of entire equality.

This treaty, however, which superseded the Clayton-Bulwer treaty of April 19, 1850,<sup>31</sup> preventing exclusive control of a

trans-Isthmian canal by the United States, permitted the United States to "maintain such military police along the canal as may be necessary to protect it against lawlessness and disorder."<sup>32</sup> Under this authorization the United States has fortified the canal and its approaches.

The value of an offer by Great Britain to neutralize the West Indies possessions, according to exponents of this proposal, would lie in the moral effect it would have on Anglo-American relations and better understanding between the two countries.

### FRENCH NAVAL BASES

Although the French colonial empire is second only to that of the British Empire, its defense is not perhaps so difficult. The French possessions in North Africa are safe as long as France can control its communications across the Mediterranean. The principal remaining units to be defended are French West Africa, Indo-China, and Madagascar. Each of these units has a native army capable of defending the territory from attack in case communications with the home country are cut.<sup>33</sup>

In 1898 a French decree provided that ten naval bases should be established to assist in the defense of the French colonial empire. The number has since been reduced to the following five: Dakar, in French West Africa; Saigon, in Indo-China; Diego-Suarez, in Madagascar; Noumea, in New Caledonia; and Fort-de-France, in Martinique. The latter is the only French base in the Caribbean. The French Ministry of Marine is now equipping some of these bases, such as Dakar and Saigon, with fuel reservoirs, in order to supply French oil-burning warships.

French naval bases are described as follows:

"Dakar, which possesses a dry dock of 197 metres, is now developing its repair shops; local defense is in course of transformation. Saigon is provided with a good dry dock of 157 metres, which is, however, inadequate for our 10,000-ton cruisers. Its arsenal is important; it employs more than 1,000 workmen who do repair work for our

ships in the Orient, and who also work for the colony. The mouth of the river at Cap Saint-Jacques is well-defended; important barracks and storehouses are being constructed for use by submarines.

"It is in fact an excellent decision which the Ministry of Marine has recently taken to maintain permanently in Indo-China three submarines and one dispatch boat. The resources of the home country will soon make it possible, it is to be hoped, to protect our principal colonies by this excellent instrument of coast defense. The admirable roadstead of Diego-Suarez, protected by good forts, has a superb dry dock 200 metres in length, but its shops are in poor condition and probably need to be completely transformed. The little harbor of Fort-de-France is the fourth and last of our Colonial Empire. The facilities for maintenance and repair of our naval forces in the Pacific Ocean—the most interesting perhaps from the strategic point of view—are derisory. The Navy Department must soon send to Noumea a small floating dock for the repairing of ships of small tonnage. Finally, other colonial parts, conveniently located for merchant traffic, such as Casablanca, Beyrouth, Djibouti and Papeete, cannot remain long without protection. An urgent task for the next few years will be to endow all of the French colonies with means of naval defense—naval forces and bases—which are indispensable to their security."<sup>34</sup>

32. Article III, Clause 2.

33. Girault, *Principes de Colonisation et Coloniale*, Vol. I, p. 385.

34. "Les Bases Navales," Part II, *Le Temps*, September 9, 1929.

30. W. M. Malloy, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 782.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 659.

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